

MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT



*Attaining the highest quality of life and security
for all who live, work, learn, and visit
the City of Mount Vernon . . .*

*. . . by working with the community
promoting safety and reducing crime.*

Strategic Plan 2015-2019

***MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT
STRATEGIC PLAN
2015 - 2019***

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MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT

CODE OF ETHICS

As a Mount Vernon Police Officer, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder and to respect the Constitutional Rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice.



I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all; maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self restraint and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed in both my personal and official life. I will be exemplary in obeying the laws of the land and the regulations of the office. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided in me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty. I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities or friendships to influence my decisions.

With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the police service. I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession law enforcement.



DEPARTMENT VISION

Safe and Enjoyable Community Living



DEPARTMENT MISSION

To consistently seek and find ways to affirmatively promote, preserve, and deliver a feeling of security, safety, and productive, quality services to citizens and visitors of our community

The Department's Vision, Mission and Values, in concert with the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, reflect the guiding philosophy of the Mount Vernon Police Department.

To the Mayor, City Council, Staff and the Citizens of Mount Vernon,

On behalf of the men and women of the Mount Vernon Police Department, it is my pleasure to present our 2015-2019 Strategic Plan.

The Mount Vernon Police Department exists to serve the citizens, businesses, and visitors in the City of Mount Vernon. We are committed to maintaining the standards of a professional law enforcement agency while meeting the needs and expectations of our community. With this in mind, we have developed this plan as a working document to assist us in evaluating the continued development of the agency as well as the developments and challenges expected in Mount Vernon and in policing in the next five years.



Strategic planning is the foundation for the future of any organization. For the Mount Vernon Police Department, our Strategic Plan not only serves as the foundation for how we will provide police services in the future, but also serves as the Department's vehicle for accomplishing needed change. The way in which we deliver services is founded in our belief in community policing and commitment to every one of our neighborhoods. The critical aspects of community oriented policing are problem solving, a focus on service delivery at the neighborhood level, and community partnerships.

More specifically, this plan is intended to communicate our goals and strategies in the context of providing for public safety and an enhanced quality of life for the City of Mount Vernon. It is also intended to recognize our strengths and our limitations and how they determine our capacity for the implementation of these goals and strategies.

This plan is an evolving document that is reviewed and updated every other year to assist us in focusing our available resources for both efficiency and effectiveness. We welcome your review of the document and any feedback you may have to assist us in working collaboratively with you to better serve Mount Vernon.

President Calvin Coolidge once said, *"No one is compelled to choose the profession of a police officer, but having chosen it, everyone is obligated to perform its duties and live up to the high standards of its requirements."* The Mount Vernon Police Department recognizes this obligation and takes it very seriously. This strategic plan is another tool to assist us in performing our duties to best serve the community while meeting the high standards that we place on ourselves.

Finally, we enjoy tremendous support from the Mayor and the City Council. It is with their support, and the support of Mount Vernon citizens, that we have been able to move forward with many of our strategic priorities.

Jerry L. Dodd
Chief of Police



MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century - Preparing for the 22nd Century

One certainty in policing is constant evolution and change. In order to continue to provide the best services possible, it is imperative we keep pace with transformations that occur both in policing and in our community.

A policing agency with strong ethics and integrity will equate to a superior agency that does the right thing for the right reason.

The key to a strong and vibrant department is largely dependent on the quality of its employees. Recruiting and hiring police officers is becoming increasingly more difficult. While we work hard to attract candidates, the number of “quality” candidates has diminished dramatically. This is a local, regional, and national trend. While some agencies have bowed to pressure to fill positions by lowering hiring standards, we have not. To do so is risky and could eventually erode the community’s trust in us.

We must remain firm on maintaining hiring practices that ensure we employ staff who are educated, mature, and maintain a high standard of integrity and honesty. They must be well trained and equipped with the tools and skills necessary to deal with the issues and concerns of our complex society.

Our ability to keep up with the constantly changing technological advances is a major challenge. Some of the more important changes in this regard involve the use of computers as a tool by criminals to commit crimes. The evolution of the use of DNA in identifying the guilt or innocence of a person suspected of a crime has been dramatic.

The use of surveillance cameras to detect crimes in real-time or afterwards has gained national popularity. We have achieved successes through the City Camera Surveillance Program in identifying and arresting criminals. Additionally, grant funding was obtained and the Police and Court Campus received a camera surveillance system which ties into the existing City Camera Surveillance Program. The Department has made the transition to allow the use of e-ticketing for the issuance of infractions and citations. In 2013, the Department completed transmitting crime data through a new process called National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) which was a major accomplishment for the Department.



Technology advances in investigating crimes from the initial call through conviction is also a priority. In 2010, the Department began researching zone deployment with

implementation in 2011. Twelve geographic zones throughout the City were created. These zones are separate from the already established two full service Neighborhood Stations at Kulshan and West Hill. In 2014, Patrol Officers and a Community Service Officer were assigned to four of the neighborhood zones and additional zones. In addition, staff meets bi-monthly in a program called “Operations Talk.” This program uses technology by way of crime mapping to pinpoint hot spots and areas of the City which require attention. Significant successes have occurred through information exchange during “Operations Talk.”

There have been many changes that attempt to ensure the safety of citizens nationally with regard to terrorism. Locally, we have benefited from the resources allocated towards preventing terrorism. Local agencies have received radios that enhance communications and interoperability. Department members are trained in a variety of FEMA Incident Command classes. A regional Northwest Incident Management Team has been developed to assist local agencies in the management of unusual occurrences. A reverse 911 system “My States USA” has been purchased and is available to all cities in Skagit County to utilize for unusual occurrences and other public safety purposes.

It is not uncommon for citizens to express their viewpoint on a wide range of issues and topics. We see this through direct public contacts, the media, and demonstrators who protest specific issues. This has created increased challenges and responsibility for the Department and community in how we respond. We have found an open and honest exchange between the Department and citizens can help dramatically in working through these types of issues. The Department’s focus on programs designed to interact with the community (Citizens Academy, Block Watch, Preparatory Academy, and our many volunteer opportunities) are examples of our attempt to reach out and interact with the community we serve.



Community expectations in how we, as an organization, can be responsive in providing resources to ensure citizens continue to live, work, learn, and play in a safe environment are very high. The citizenry, especially with the current economic climate, demands we be as efficient as possible. To ensure we do just that requires a critical eye on budgeting, staffing, and re-thinking how best to respond to calls for service.

As we look to the future, we must place a strong emphasis on strategic and operational planning. To act in the contrary will be moving forward looking through a fog unsure of our destiny or of the results we may achieve. As you work your way through this document, will become very clear our purpose and the direction we are taking to continue to make our community a great place to live, work, learn, and play.



WHO WE SERVE

The continuous focus on the residents and visitors of Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon is made up of 33,580 residents (2015) with 50.1 males and 49.9 females. It was incorporated in 1890, covers 12.3 square miles and is the center of County government. The community will continue to grow at a rate that could potentially result in an approximate population of 47,403 residents by year 2025

Skagit Valley Community College hosts students from throughout the region and the world, and provides an array of academic and vocational learning opportunities for several thousand people.

The demographic face of Mount Vernon has been changing over the last several years as the population continues to increase. The area is viewed as an attractive place to live due to its rural feel, abundant recreational opportunities, proximity to the Bellingham/Seattle/Everett job market, and lesser-expensive real estate. In 2014, Mount Vernon represented 27% of the County's total population. This percentage has been constant for many years; however, is expected to take a larger share over the next several years due to an increase in growth within the City and a gradual population decline in unincorporated areas of the County (50.4% in 1970 to 43% in 2011).



Cultural and language differences have created communication challenges. Over 33% percent (2010 est.) of the community's population and over 54% of enrolled students in the Mount Vernon School District is Hispanic (2012 MVSD). In Skagit County, over 17% of the population are Hispanic. Calculating the population 0-24 years of age county-wide indicates the percentage among the Hispanic population in 2010 is 52.7%. When looking at the total county-wide population in 2010, which includes Hispanics, the percentage drops to 31%.

Another factor that will dramatically affect policing over the next 15 years is the anticipated growth of our younger and senior populations. In 2010, approximately 28% of our population was under the age of 18. This is the prime age for first exposure to criminal activity. Currently, that group represents 30% of the local population (2010 census). In Mount Vernon, 10.8% of children are raised in single-parent families and 11% of families are living below the poverty level (2010 census). The School District has an on time graduation rate of 72% (2012 MVSD).

Youth violence in Mount Vernon continues to show signs of increasing as new offenders emerge and violent offenders who had been serving prison terms return to the community. The Department dedicated a vast amount of resources in an attempt to deal with this emerging trend. We believe youth violence can best be targeted by

dedicating staff to address gang-related issues. Officers in the schools provide a safety component, preventative, and mentorship role with the goal of helping youth make positive healthy life choices. Partnerships have been established with schools, youth and family services, law enforcement agencies, and other community stakeholders who deal with youth violence. We are striving to provide education and prevention and obtain dispositions to incidents through enforcement.

The elderly (over 65 years of age) make up over 13.2% of our County's population (2010 census) and that figure is expected to grow. Senior citizens are frequently victimized by thieves and confidence professionals. Many of the crimes against the elderly are "hidden," resulting in considerable investigative time being spent in this area.



WHO WE ARE

It is the Mission of the Mount Vernon Police Department “To consistently seek and find ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety, and productive quality service to citizens and visitors of the community”.

The Mount Vernon Police Department is a well-trained and full service municipal police agency providing essential policing services within its city limits. The City is home to over 33,000 citizens, and serves as the county seat for Skagit County.

To fulfill its mission, the Department has a **FY2015 total budget of \$8,879,016**. Funding is appropriated as follows:

Salaries and Benefits	\$6,040,333
Overtime	\$ 305,672
Supply	\$ 666,125
Operational Services	\$2,022,422
Police Training	\$ 46,269
Capital Needs	\$ 62,078
TOTAL	\$9,142,899



<u>Budgets</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016(est)</u>
Population	32,101	32,250	32,710	33,170	33,530	33,730
Actuals	\$6,822,346	\$7,220,889	\$7,179,243	\$7,313,777	\$9,142,899	\$9,448,311

The 2015 budget for the City of Mount Vernon is \$52,228,415. The Police Department represents 34% of the operating funds. The City is a mission driven organization and to provide its services requires a dedicated workforce - 75% of the entire operating costs are labor. The City employs 200 full time employees and 53 part time

employees.

The Department's 2015 **authorized strength** consists of forty-five commissioned officers, two Community Service Officers, one Animal Control Officer, and nine non-sworn support personnel, for a total of 57.5 employees. In addition, approximately 50 volunteers provide a variety of services in support of Department programs. Staffing is arranged as follows:

- 1 - Chief of Police
- 3 - Division Lieutenants
- 6 - Squad Sergeants
- 34 - Police Officers
- 2 - Community Service Officers
- 1 - Records Manager
- 5.5 - Records Specialists
- 1 - Administrative Assistant
- 1 - Secretary
- 1 - Receptionist
- 1 - Animal Control

57.5 - Total Personnel

FUNCTIONAL DIVISIONS

The Police Department is arranged in two (2) Bureaus and six (6) subordinate Divisions.

The **Operations Bureau** is comprised of the following Divisions:

- Patrol
- Criminal Investigations
- Crime Prevention

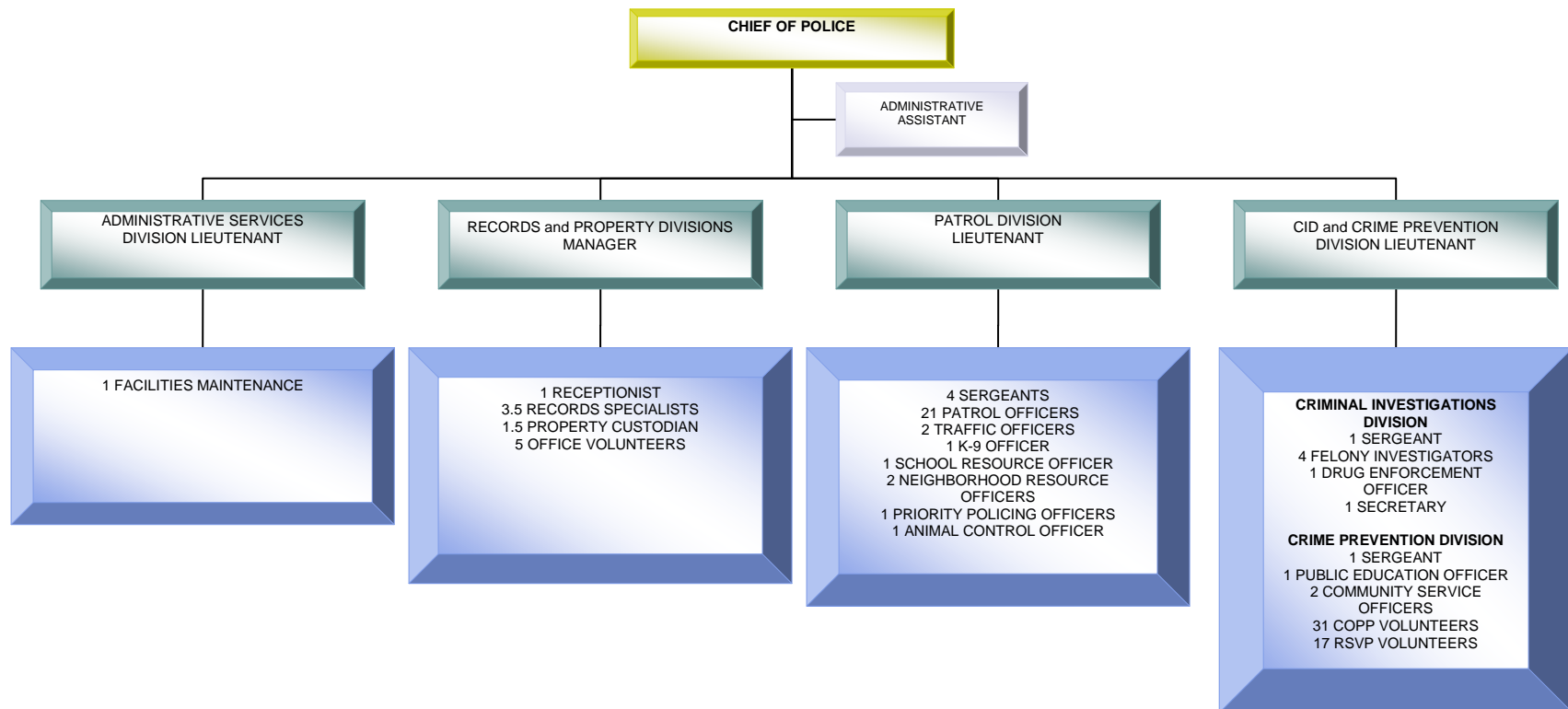
The **Services Bureau** is comprised of the following Divisions:

- Records
- Property & Evidence
- Administrative Services



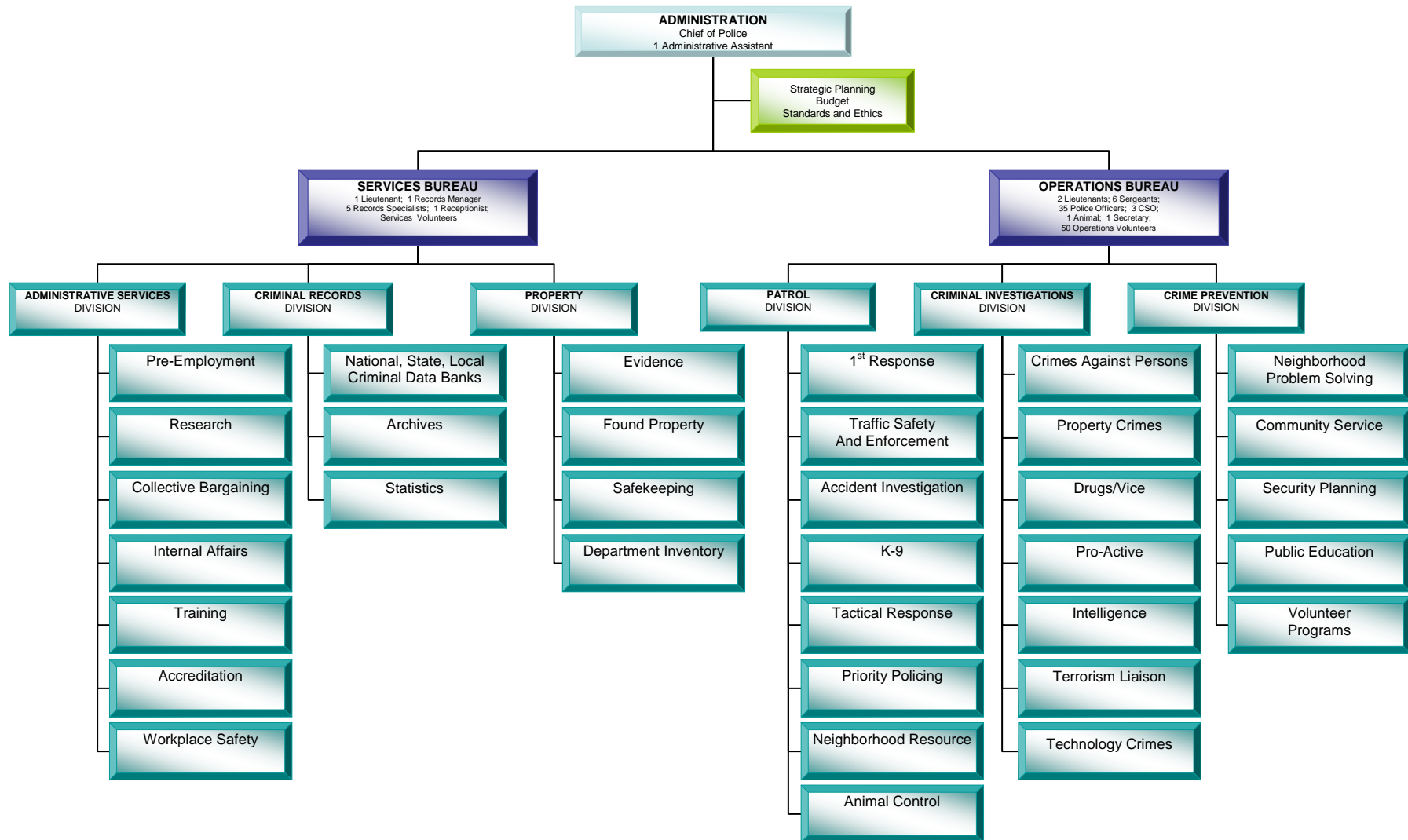
MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT

STAFFING ORGANIZATION



MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT

FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION





CORE VALUES

What we believe

The men and women of the Mount Vernon Police Department are dedicated to fulfilling the Department Mission and Vision, and commit their energy and ability to continue the history of providing quality service to all citizens of the community. In doing so, the Department strives to uphold a set of core values that represent the basic fabric of the organizational culture:

1. The highest value is placed on the preservation of human life.
2. The principles of a democratic society must be preserved and advanced.
3. The first operational priority is to *prevent* crime.
4. The community must be involved in policing itself.
5. The Department is accountable to the community it serves.
6. The Department is committed to professionalism in all aspects of operations.
7. The Department is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity.
8. The Department must be attuned with a community in continual cultural change.



DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

Fulfilling our policing mission

Established operational priorities place the highest importance on delivering quality professional services to the community through open communication and adaptability in addressing problems. While emphasis is placed on building stronger neighborhoods, we continue to employ enforcement practices where necessary with the ultimate goal of modifying behavior. Protection of our citizens, their property, and visitors to this community are the driving force behind what we do and how it is accomplished.

We are committed to fulfilling our policing mission through the following practices.

1. Employing a highly competent and qualified staff
2. Providing a quick and rapid response to emergencies

3. Effective policing practices to combat criminal activity
4. High visibility of Department personnel and volunteers
5. Building community partnerships and problem solving together
6. Developing a sense of trust and understanding with the community
7. Utilizing prevention practices as a central operating strategy
8. Demonstrating the highest standards of professional conduct and ethics



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Overview of planning purpose and process

From a service standpoint, this *STRATEGIC PLAN* serves as the Police Department's guide for preparation and response to community issues of crime and public safety. In addition, it provides the basis for annual budget planning and is the central feature of the Department's performance management system.

The Police Department's planning process involves staff from all assignments and levels of responsibility. The outcome of this annual process is a document that serves as a guide for service level adjustment, program development, resource allocation, and budget preparation.

The process involves a continuous information flow from community members (formal and informal; written and oral). *Sources* of information related to issues of crime and public safety include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Block Watch Meetings
- Citizen complaints/concerns
- Crime statistics
- City Council Meetings
- Planning Commission Meetings
- Business contacts
- Citizen surveys
- Public Safety Committee Meetings
- Newspapers
- Mayor's Coffee
- Facebook
- Citizen Boards
- Community networks (*examples: Apartment Managers and Bank Managers Networks*)
- Officer observations
- Operations Talk (Department program designed to identify and solve community wide issues or problems)
- Information "Hot Line"

- Health statistics
- Citizens' Academy
- Traffic Safety Committee Meetings
- City Ward Meetings
- Crime victims
- Commissioned studies (housing, health, crime, population, education, etc.)



PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The standards applied

In planning for future policing focus in our community, the Police Department adheres to three distinguishing principles: communication, collaboration, and comprehensiveness.

- **Communication** is two-way and all-level. Ideas and insight are sought after and encouraged at all Department levels. The same is true at the community level.
- **Collaboration** is imperative if measurable success is to be attained.
- **Comprehensiveness** becomes a safeguard against omission of important planning elements or policing needs.

The Department employs two needs-assessment models. It combines the attributes of a *needs-based* model with those of a *capacity-focused* model. This approach emphasizes the balanced investigation of neighborhood and other community needs with the discovery of community resources available to assist citizens in investing in themselves and quality-of-life improvement efforts.



PLANNING METHODOLOGY

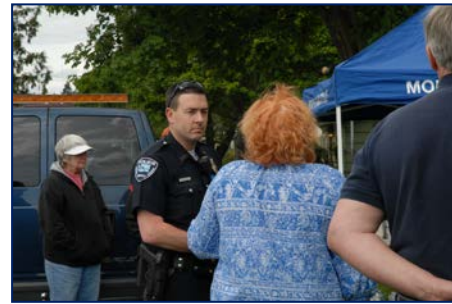
The system of planning practices

To ensure accurate planning, ongoing input from the general public is required. Five methods are routinely used by the Department to gather information: (1) Review of publications, including scientific and professional journals; (2) Surveys, internal and external; (3) Site visits of community institutions and service providers; (4) Public meetings such as Block Watch, School Board, and City Council; (5) Statistical review.

METHOD I: A review of various publications is an ongoing practice. Scientific journals and other similar documents are reviewed for changes in forensic practices that may impact the Department's procedures or budget.

Newspaper articles and editorials are reviewed for current opinion and public attitude toward pertinent issues. Public agency reports are reviewed for demographic updates and other information relevant to police planning.

METHOD II: Neighborhoods may be surveyed to learn what residents sense as the most important issues relating to crime, fear, and public safety. In the course of work, police personnel are regularly questioned to gain a practitioner's viewpoint on the condition of the community and potential solutions to crime problems. The Department web site incorporates a community survey tool that can be easily accessed and sent to the Department electronically.



METHOD III: Contact is made with institutions, such as schools and churches, as well as social service agencies and other police agencies to discuss common planning issues. In addition, many community needs are determined through communication with service clubs and volunteer organizations.

METHOD IV: Direct contact with citizens at public gatherings such as Block Watch Meetings, City Council Meetings, Planning Commission Meetings, Public Safety Committee Meetings, City Council Ward Meetings, school meetings, community networks, and action groups are usually excellent opportunities to gain information on what the community feels to be current public safety issues.

METHOD V: Local, regional, and national crime statistics are customary sources for data acquisition in police planning.



PLANNING PROCESS

DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A performance measurement tool

For the Police Department to be effective and efficient, it must continually plan. The Department prescribes to a formal process or model (see below). Prior to the preparation of each year's budget, the Police Department holds a series of internal division-level workshops to develop and/or revise goals and objectives. Personnel are asked to plan for their specific divisional needs for the coming year. These needs must align with the Department Mission and Broad Goals for providing responsive service, reducing crime, and improving public safety.



The information gained from staff is evaluated for congruency and relevancy in the long-range plan of the organization. Most surviving data are shaped into a preliminary report and combined with information gathered from citizens. Once all information is collected, the following goals and objectives are constructed. These goals are intended as short-term steps in the long-range plan. In essence, this information becomes the narrative and justification for annual Department funding requests.

Early summer, the Police Chief facilitates a Department-wide planning workshop, to include command and supervisory staff, line officers, Guild President, and Records personnel. The workshop identifies and prioritizes the specific needs that may cross over and overlap a variety of work units or groups. This collaboration process establishes organizational priorities with specific accountabilities and timelines. The results are published for all staff to review. The workshop findings are used to prepare for the Capital Project process and for developing the longer range strategic needs of the Department.

In June of 2015, the following Department-wide items were identified and prioritized.

HIGH PRIORITY

- a. Need of additional personnel
- b. Quality of candidate
- c. Jail overcrowding
- d. Lead Officer and Sergeant interest in testing
- e. Patrol schedule
- f. Poor radio transmissions/reception
- g. Direct Connect/Cell phones
- h. K-9 replacement

MEDIUM PRIORITY

- a. Aging vehicles
- b. Crime analysis
- c. Aging staff
- d. Laptop upgrade

LOW PRIORITY

- a. Deteriorated equipment
- b. South end satellite office
- c. Aging building
- d. Daytime campus parking
- e. Lateral attraction

Each item has been assigned timelines and staff responsible for progress. Every year at the planning workshop items will be reviewed, updated, and reprioritized.



LONG-RANGE FOCUS *Generally, what we aim for*

The *STRATEGIC PLAN* contains a section comprised of a less-focused set of vision statements. These statements are developed through a careful ongoing study of community values, demographic changes, and policing trends. These visions usually do not change dramatically over the short term.



PLAN EVALUATION *Adjusting the policing mechanism*

Evaluation of the *STRATEGIC PLAN* is an ongoing process. Adjustments are accomplished through internal administrative mechanisms and, where appropriate, community and City Council Members and other City staff may become involved. During even-numbered years, the Plan is rewritten to reflect major changes to Department direction and focus. In odd-numbered years, minor adjustments are made to the Plan to reflect Divisional progress toward goals and to ensure the most efficient use of resources.



POLICING PHILOSOPHY

The motivating principles

Philosophically, the Department espouses a series of linked operating principles that require neighborhood-based partnerships to solve problems relative to crime, fear and neighborhood decay. Fundamentally, there are four primary strategies that form the substance of our service and mission.

1. There must be open and trusting two-way communication **“EXCHANGE”** between police and citizens. Citizens are heard and involved in the delivery of policing service.

2. **“PREVENTION”** is the central strategy in all operations. It is, by far, more to the community's advantage to prevent crime than it is to react to it once it has occurred.



3. Reduction of crime and fear, solutions to neighborhood problems, and general issues of public safety are **“SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES”**.

Safer streets will be realized only if police and citizens collaborate to make it so.

4. If we are to be successful in our mission, we must be **“ADAPTABLE”**. No two neighborhoods are exactly alike, nor are the factors that make up their problems. It is our preference to apply flexible, tailored policing plans to each problem as identified and mutually validated.

Organizationally, this philosophy is expected to be visible in the work product of all Department members and is a priority consideration in hiring and transfer decisions.



OPERATIONAL PRIORITY

It is of greater benefit to prevent crime than to respond to it

The Department's first operational priority is to prevent crime. Over the past decade, more emphasis has been placed on *prevention* as the Department transitioned from a traditional operational strategy of “patrol and deter” to a broader interactive and community-based strategy that incorporates systematic problem solving as an essential component. Neighborhood improvement projects are regular occurrences and are aimed at making neighborhoods less vulnerable to crime and disorder. Preventative strategies are at the core of all police efforts to reduce crime and fear.

Evaluation of recent prevention-based projects has pointed to improvements in the life quality of affected residents.

An example of this approach to policing is the function called “Neighborhood Resource Officer” (NRO). The NRO concept is designed to concentrate pertinent police resources on neighborhoods with extraordinary challenges. The goal is to reduce crime, fear of crime, and neighborhood decay to a level generally equal to the greater community. The effort is coordinated through one specially trained officer. He or she must organize and mobilize that neighborhood to not only help in the reduction of crime, but also to develop strategies to protect the area from the inevitable return of crime due to the periodic introduction of new and additional antisocial influences. This is accomplished through the residents’ collective experiences and knowledge combined with the prevention-specific training and guidance provided by police. This approach may take one year, or it may take several years of hard work, depending on the complexity of the specific problem.



Another example the Department has undertaken is through the utilization of “zone deployment.” This involves dividing the City into twelve zones in addition to the two already established full service neighborhoods which are already established at Kulshan Creek and West Hill. The Patrol Officers responsible for these geographic boundaries work with the community to identify and solve neighborhood issues and/or problems. Every other month meetings occur where staff looks at all zones to identify hot spots

that require resources to rectify. The Department has observed great success in dealing with a variety of issues bringing them to resolution with this program called “Operations Talk.”

A central focus on prevention must not be interpreted as a reduced eye for enforcement. No successful policing plan is all one or the other. As long as there are relative deprivation, unsupervised children, unemployment, mental illness and an array of personality disorders, there will be crime. **Prevention** efforts alone have their limits. They may not be able to fully address the actions of impulsive, violent, or predatory offenders. **Enforcement** efforts alone do nothing to get at what is allowing the criminal activity to occur in the first place. As an example, the single enforcement strategy of placing police officers outside of bars and lounges to arrest drunk drivers will undoubtedly result in DUI arrests every night but will do little to stop the problem of drinking and driving.

Ultimately, it is all about creating a balance of strategies that will most likely prevent the problem from reoccurring. For the example above, working with bar owners to prevent over service; working through the media to inform the public; educating children in the schools; and maintaining a consistent enforcement stance against drinking and driving all help to have a combined lasting impact on the problem.



FUTURE ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

Policing is all about people and requires people to do the work.

Policing involves people; *people* do the policing, and, *people* are policed. Most citizens will have some interaction with police at one time or another - whether it is a neighbor's emergency, a collision, a nuisance, a crime, suspicious circumstances, or fear. As the population grows, so does the number of people in need of police services. Technology can mitigate that need to a point. In the end, it takes *people*.

The City of Mount Vernon continues to grow, picking up momentum in the last few years. In the year 2025, the population is expected to reach 47,900 residents (MV Development Services, 2012). Planning strategically for this growth becomes extremely important if we are to provide a relatively safe and enjoyable community.

Accurately predicting the staffing needs of a police department is difficult at best. There is no universally applicable staffing standard for police departments because of the many community variables in play. Calls for service, policing philosophy, priorities and practices, population size, composition and density, cultural fabric, reporting practices,



transiency of the population, prosecutorial and judicial policies, crime trends, and political climate all have an effect on staffing a police department.

Presuming there will be no change in the Mayor and City Council public safety priorities, it is possible to create, albeit imprecise, a picture of the Police Department five, ten or twenty years into the future. In calculating the number of police officers and support staff that may be needed by the year 2023, the Police Department examines two different sets of data.

The first set, although not particularly meaningful, looks at state averages for communities the size of Mount Vernon, based *only on population*. This method of calculation is relatively popular with municipal officials because it is the easiest to understand and to politically defend. It, of course, assumes that the comparable cities have all used valid methods themselves and that the community characteristics have been considered and are similar. This is rarely the case.

In 2002, the last time the Department was near the (2014/1.47) state average for officers per 1000 population, it was staffed at a rate of 1.61 officers per 1000 population, and 2.0 total staff per 1000 population. This "blind" calculation might suggest the Police Department was adequately staffed in 2002. The danger in this

method of calculation is that it does not take into consideration the characteristics of this community or the behaviors of the population when compared to another City of equal population.

The *average* is only an arithmetically derived figure somewhere near the mid-point of a series of higher and lower numbers. In 2013, the state average for Cities between 25,000-50,000 was 1.27 officers per 1000 population. Currently the 2015 Department average is 1.38 officers per 1000 population. Over the past five years staffing levels have been stagnate.

<u>Commissioned</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016(est)</u>
Officers	44	44	44	44	45	45	45
Population	31,804	32,101	32,250	32,710	33,170	32,554	32,821
Officers Per Capita (1,000)	1.38	1.37	1.36	1.35	1.36	1.38	1.37

In Mount Vernon, this number of officers is unable to handle all calls for service without regularly seeking assistance from surrounding jurisdictions. Most often, calls are “stacked” until officers are available. Some of these calls for service are held for non-sworn staff. If this method is applied using the 2012 officers-per-1000 factor of 1.38, with a conservative population growth to a future population of over 36,000 residents in year 2017, there will be a need for **50 police officers** (@ 2.5% annual population growth) to **61 police officers** (@ 3.5% annual population growth) in year 2017 to provide today’s level of service. An important point to note is this estimation is based on the premise that the current staffing level is appropriate to meet the service demands this City requires.

<u>Service Calls</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Population	31,804	32,101	32,250	32,710	32,287	32,530
Calls	21,802	21,274	21,011	20,787	21,011	21,235

In 2011, one sworn and one non-sworn staff position was removed from the budget due to tough economic times. The Department will require (at a minimum) an average of 1.15 *additional* officers every year, in addition to necessary support staff; an aggressive venture. The extrapolation detailed above with a modest population increase will result in the number of officers needed to remain *understaffed* based on the current number of police officers and service/call load demands.

The second, and arguably more supportable method of calculating true staffing needs, involves evaluating calls for police service. In 2011, MVPD employed 2.12 officers per 1000 calls for service and 2.70 total staff. Calculations by this method suggest a need for **51 police officers** in addition to necessary support staff for a population of over 36,000 and over 24,000 calls for service in the year 2019. However; this assumes no more than a 2.5% annual growth in calls for service. If there was a 3.5% annual increase in calls for service to year 2019, there could be a staffing need for up to **54 police officers**. Fortunately, 3.5% growth each year for five years is unlikely. As stated above with the current staffing level and calls for service as the starting base for quantification, it assumes the Department is adequately staffed. The actual need will be *higher* than projected as outlined above.

The **point of this discussion** is to emphasize the Department cannot predict, with certainty, the exact staffing picture for a point in time ten or more years away.

However, by annually evaluating and updating the data, the Mayor and Council can gain some sense for ongoing staffing needs. By being informed, fiscal challenges can be planned for well in advance.



STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

Developing a future perspective

The Police Department operates in a dynamic environment that includes political, social, technological and environmental factors relative to crime and disorder. These factors have a direct impact on programs and operations. The key elements of the Department's Strategic Plan are the goals, objectives, and operational strategies that are outlined in this document.

This section of the Plan is intended to present the strategic outlook for the Department in the areas of crime prevention, response, and control. It attempts to make sense of the goals and objectives when placed in a strategic context.

Details of Department delivery and outcome measures are not included in this document. They are developed and maintained at the Division level.



As a basis for developing this Strategic Plan, the Department has identified the following key assumptions that if significantly changed, would affect the ability to implement or maintain effective service programs.

1. The community will continue to grow at a rate that will result in an approximate population of 47,900 residents by year 2025 and the Department will realize staffing levels in accordance with the established staffing plan.
2. The Mayor and City Council will maintain public safety as a high community priority and will adjust budgets, as appropriate, to keep up with community growth, crime trends, and local, state, and federal crime initiatives.
3. The Department will propose crime impact measures that are likely to have the greatest effect on crime and work with the Mayor and City Council to accomplish their implementation.
4. The Department will philosophically maintain a balanced approach to policing that includes exchange, prevention, adaptability, and shared responsibility as core strategic principles and rapid response, aggressive enforcement, and relentless investigation as the mainstay tactics used against crime and disorder.

5. The effects of the world wide terrorist threat will not significantly impact this community in the foreseeable future.

Based on these planning assumptions, the Strategic Plan for years **2015-2019** has been developed. It includes long-range, mid-range, and annual goals and objectives.

The specific objectives in this document are developed at the Division level with involvement from all personnel. It is the Department's experience that the more involved personnel are in the process of planning, the more successful it is at providing effective and responsive police services. Everyone is committed to reducing crime and protecting the quality of life enjoyed in the community. While many of the objectives may seem insignificant at first glance, they all contain a thread of connectivity to the larger goal of maintaining a safe community.



DEPARTMENTAL BROAD GOALS

The sustaining Broad Goals of the Mount Vernon Police Department have been in place for many years and remain sound. All organizational plans, including annual division-level goals and objectives, are required to be congruous and subordinate to the Department's Statement of Broad Goals.

Statement of Broad Goals

The Department will strive to provide policing service to the citizens of Mount Vernon congruent with its Vision and Mission. The below enumerated broad Department goals are the general guide to that end.

1. To decrease the amount of actual and perceived criminal activity.
2. To deliver the type of police service consistent with community needs and the ideals of modern policing practices.
3. To create and maintain community-wide awareness of crime problems and methods of increasing police ability to deal with actual or potential criminal activity.
4. To create and maintain community-wide awareness and commitment to community-based policing principles as an effective means to attaining the Department Mission and ultimately the Department Vision.
5. To recognize no two neighborhoods are exactly alike and to design our policing functions, approaches, and deployment to meet the needs of each neighborhood.



LONG RANGE FOCUS

Where are we are going

Although difficult to predict conditions and needs beyond the immediate future, the Department must plan several years ahead. This is especially true when trying to identify funding mechanisms for staffing and equipment needs in support of necessary programs. Through evaluation of the many official studies that are available to us and by staying current on the professional literature, we can formulate a generalized vision for the Police Department beyond the year 2019.

It is recognized preparations for a future time must be fluid. The community does not exist in isolation. Regional and world events will be an influence and will cause a need to continually reshape the plan. With this in mind, there should be an expectation to regularly modify whatever plan is developed for the future of policing in Mount Vernon. As we look beyond 2019, we have identified seven focus areas.

Focus #1 A well defined public/police **partnership** to identify and provide effective and appropriate police services. By institutionalizing this practice, the word “community” is merely a descriptor for the Department’s policing model. The goal is for “Community” to be a seamless component of policing.



Focus #2 Fully integrated 21st Century **technology** to complement the traditional methods of policing. This will enhance the Department’s ability to efficiently plan for, prevent, and respond to crime, fear, and neighborhood challenges, including those introduced by the e-criminal.

Focus #3 A working relationship with **non-traditional** partners to address certain calls for service normally handled by publicly funded police agencies and which may be more appropriately handled by the private sector.

Focus #4 Alternative **methods to address the increasing homelessness** population. To take a dual approach to address this very complex issue, compliance and enforcement efforts and to build relationships with local and regional social and health service providers.

Focus #5 The **merging or retooling of certain police functions** within the County to improve consistency and effectiveness. Examples might include various administrative services, emergency management, centralized records, property and evidence, and specialized services such as K-9, major crime investigation, covert and

tactical operations. It may be feasible to consolidate specialized police services in the county as criminal justice costs increase and a higher, more consistent standard of service is expected.

Focus #6 A **semi-permanent police presence** in all neighborhoods and business districts through “zone deployment.” This type of presence is currently well established in the Kulshan Creek and West Hill Neighborhoods and has proven highly effective in reducing crime.

Focus #7 A **county-wide collaboration to address violent crime issues affecting our communities.** The upsurge in gang activity and violence may be best addressed by forming partnerships among criminal justice agencies, schools, churches, and other community members.



MID RANGE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 2015-2017

GOAL #1

IMPROVE THE COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF INTER-AGENCY POLICING EFFORTS AFFECTING THE MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT AND COMMUNITY.

OBJECTIVE 1 Continue to encourage all Skagit County police agencies to establish a common philosophy of policing, with strategic policies of a similar tone for engaging and involving the community in the delivery of our services and reducing crime, the fear that it creates, and neighborhood decay.

OBJECTIVE 2 Study the state of police services within Skagit County. Report on what services might yet be combined, added, or deleted in the interest of efficiency and consistent service to the public.

OBJECTIVE 3 Develop a county-wide strategy addressing violent crime associated with investigating and monitoring gang activity.

OBJECTIVE 4 Support Skagit County in addressing the jail over crowding issue.

GOAL #2

MAINTAIN DEPARTMENT EFFECTIVENESS AS THE COMMUNITY GROWS IN AREA AND POPULATION.

OBJECTIVE 1 Update the Police Department Staffing Plan to reflect projected changes in population and call load.

OBJECTIVE 2 Increase the number of police officers to stay at pace with the Staffing Plan.

OBJECTIVE 3 Distribute staff to effectively manage the call load and meet the needs of the community.

OBJECTIVE 4 Continue to be adaptable and address community issues that develop.

OBJECTIVE 5 Increase the CSO staffing to allow for a more efficient response to calls for service.

OBJECTIVE 6 Continue to hire officers and support staff that more closely reflects the makeup of our community to improve communication between the Department and the community.

OBJECTIVE 7 Continue to plan for increased growth and future planned annexation throughout the City.

OBJECTIVE 8 Define and implement a plan for having patrol officers assigned geographic areas.

OBJECTIVE 9 Complete a review and evaluate the need to hire a non-sworn employee to serve as a forensics investigator/part time department computer technician.

GOAL #3

PROVIDE EQUIPMENT THAT WILL IMPROVE POLICE CAPABILITY AND KEEP THE DEPARTMENT CURRENT WITH ADVANCEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY.

OBJECTIVE 1 Continue to acquire updated less-lethal equipment as technology in this area improves.

OBJECTIVE 2 Efficiently acquire patrol vehicles and other police equipment as necessary.

OBJECTIVE 3 Improve officer safety with the acquisition of equipment to assist officers in the performance of their duties.

OBJECTIVE 4 Replace the aging and outdated multi-purpose vehicle for major crime scenes, extended investigations, and high risk incidents.

OBJECTIVE 5 Add digital capability to our radio system to promote better communication by all law enforcement agencies during emergencies.

OBJECTIVE 6 Continue to develop a community camera system that monitors streets, trails, parks, and other public areas.

OBJECTIVE 8 Construct an animal kennel and covered parking areas at the existing Police and Court Campus.

GOAL #4

IMPROVE THE GENERAL POLICE RECORDS FUNCTION, TO INCLUDE ISSUES OF STAFFING, ACCESSIBILITY, STORAGE, AND RETENTION.

OBJECTIVE 1 Utilizing efficient, up to date storage methods, archive police records and destroy hard copies as allowed by law and/or accreditation standards.

OBJECTIVE 2 Modify and implement the General Records Retention Schedule for the Department.

OBJECTIVE 3 Study and determine the necessity to increase staffing in the Records Division.

OBJECTIVE 4 Crime data is currently sent to Washington Association of Police Chiefs and Sheriffs in summary reporting process. Develop a county-wide strategy to report crimes and arrest data using the NIBRS reporting system.

GOAL #5

DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND RESIDENTS OF MOUNT VERNON THAT FOSTERS OPEN COMMUNICATION AND TRUST ON ISSUES RELATING TO COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SECURITY.

OBJECTIVE 1 Maintain the annual Citizen's Police Academy as a mechanism to accomplish the Department's Broad Goals.

OBJECTIVE 2 Steadily add neighborhoods to the Block Watch program.

OBJECTIVE 3 Utilize communications links such as the Department Web Site, e-mail, e-News, TV10, radio, newspaper, and neighborhood newsletters/notifications to provide educational and emergency information.

OBJECTIVE 4 Continue to attract potential police officer entry level candidates through a wide range of strategies and tactics.

OBJECTIVE 5 Maintain the volunteer programs managed through the Crime Prevention Division which enhances our communication ability with citizens, provides valuable feedback, and helps us police the community.

OBJECTIVE 6 Continue to develop a partnership with the neighborhoods that fosters two-way open communication, prevention of crime, shared responsibility, and adaptability in how we address and solve community issues that improves community safety.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Division-level Planning

Each year goals and objectives are provided by the Division Commanders who worked with assigned staff to devise ways to meet the Department Mission. Tactical aspects are not included for public viewing due to the often sensitive and protected nature of operations. Performance measures and strategic planning schedules are also not included in this document but are retained at the division level. Annual goals and objectives are posted on the Department's website.



CLOSING COMMENTS

This document serves as a future planning guide on how we can best deliver policing services to this community. Planning is vital in our efforts in achieving success as an organization; for without it, we would be reactive and move forward without clear direction, purpose, and resolve. This agency has a long standing tradition of planning for the future, anticipating community issues, obstacles, and potential set-backs.

The issues affecting this community are continuing to change. We have seen an increase in population. With growth and the attractiveness this community offers, the potential for criminal activity increases. Policing is only one element in a broader community-wide effort to provide a safe, prosperous, and enjoyable environment. Knowing this, we must continue to work internally and externally to plan for a positive future for Mount Vernon. We have seen great successes from our staff working in collaboration with other community stake holders to address issues such as youth violence, drug activity, gang violence, theft, and other forms of criminal activity.

Currently there are positive county-wide discussions with the goal of resolving the jail overcrowding issue. By working together on these and other important community issues, we stand a greater chance of success. The difficult times we are now facing with several years of economic downturn has challenged the Department to re-think our deployment strategies and do more with less. The most difficult challenge the City faces is to continue to deliver policing services the community requires and has grown to know and expect. The need for staffing resources in the Department will be a primary issue affecting this City over the next ten to fifteen years.

Policing must be addressed community-wide with overwhelming resolve, for without it we are not united and our chance of making meaningful and positive change will be diminished with resources being disconnected, duplicated, or even wasted.

The Mount Vernon Police Department, as an organization within the community, continues to be a committed partner in creating neighborhoods and business districts free from violence and other adverse conditions that allow victimization to thrive.

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